

THE VERMILION



Vol. 50, No. 4 • The Quarterly Newsletter of the Vermilion Lake Association • Fall 2023



*To Protect
and Improve
Lake Vermilion*

IN THIS ISSUE

40 years of the Loon Count...page 3
Annual meeting recap...page 4
Recognizing our volunteers...pages 5-7
Classic and Antique Boat Show...pages 8-9

Become a Lake Steward...page 10
Create a tougher buffer...page 11
PFAS testing results....16
How to hold that Musky...page 19

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Lake Neighbors and Friends,

Another summer season is over and, as I write this, we have beautiful fall colors and seasonal temperatures. I trust you enjoyed the summer at this special lake, and, hopefully had a chance to stop at our shore lunch sites and noticed some of the improvements. In addition, improvements were also made at some of the boat launches with boat cleaning stations, bait disposal bins and improved signage. Special thanks to Gary Haugen and Nancy Watkins for their leadership in organizing these improvements.



Dwight Warkentin
VLA President

We held our annual meeting on July 29 at Camp Vermilion with about 125 members attending. Doug Jensen, AIS Prevention Planner for the MN DNR, was our special speaker and provided an interesting update on AIS issues. Fortunately, the news is still positive for Lake Vermilion, as no new AIS species have been detected. A special recognition was given to Jerry Lepper for his 14 years of service as treasurer. Jerry will remain on the board and support the transition of treasurer to Mark Schmidt. In addition, Pat Michaelson was recognized for her leadership as president for the past two years.

The loon count was held once again in early July, please note the report in this issue. In addition, we had a booth at the annual Antique Boat Show at the landing on Labor Day weekend. A number of new memberships were received and lots of good contacts with existing members.

We are pleased to welcome two new board members. Andrine Lemieux is joining the board and will be leading our volunteer program. Sara Bright has also joined the board and is heading up our shoreline stewardship program. We have already awarded over 30 awards to lakeshore residents who have met the stewardship criteria. Please refer to our website for more details on how you can apply for this award. Welcome Andrine and Sara to the board! Bob Pearson is retiring from the board but will still provide advice when needed. A special thank you to Bob for his service to the VLA.

We will be sending out our annual notice for membership dues again in late November. Please make it a priority to renew your membership.

Stay safe and enjoy the fall colors on this wonderful lake.

Regards,

Dwight Warkentin, President, VLA

Cover photo by Terry Grosshauser, VLA Board Member.

Terry writes:

“Anyone that has walked an old gravel road in the fall probably has seen a grouse or seen one flush. This is quite special to a grouse hunter. Brings back memories of dogs, colorful leaves and the smell of the forest in the fall.”



Coming Soon!!!

Look in your mailboxes for membership renewal notices sometime in November. We have plans to discontinue paper mailings in the future, so it is important to include an email address so we can send Annual Meeting notices and Membership Renewals electronically. Please print clearly so we can read them correctly!

If you do not have email, please read your newsletters for upcoming events and notices.

Thank you for your compliance. We will never sell email addresses or send out frivolous emails to your inbox.

2023 Lake Vermilion Loon Count

By Joanne Bergman, VLA Member/Volunteer

This was the 40th year the Vermilion Lake Association has held the Lake Vermilion Loon Count!

Adults, singles, and chicks

Throughout the lake from east to west, volunteers counted 156 adult loons, almost as many as last year's 161. All boats reported a total of 156 adults and 29 chicks. The grand total is 185, a number close to last year's 192.

Volunteers

Sixty-six observers spent 45.5 volunteer hours compiling the data on this, the 40th anniversary year of the Loon Count on Lake Vermilion. We owe a debt of gratitude to Mardy Jackson and Barb Shook, who initiated the Vermilion count in 1983. At the time, the count took place during the fourth week of July. According to the DNR, this is the forty-third summer of loon counting in Minnesota, and today loons and their chicks are tallied on 157 of our 10,000 lakes.

The DNR conducts two kinds of loon monitoring. Some lakes count every week, and others conduct one observation during a 10-day window, usually in early July.

Four groups were new to the count, owing to moves, passing, or retiring from loon counting. Facilitator Claire Zweig suggests that this may be "the only way new people can become part of the coveted volunteer position of loon counting."

Comments from those reporting included, "It was a fun but windy day," "Numbers on Big Bay were way down," and "Lots of loons were spotted flying overhead." One group saw a deer swimming, and several boats sighted banks of white swans and white pelicans, and all are unusual and fun to see.



Craig Beveroth and Tom Cooney counting loons on Lake Vermilion last summer.

Cormorants

The VLA asks observers to report an approximate number of cormorant sightings. Accuracy is difficult because a flight of the birds is often too large to count. This year's cormorant total was 189, down from over 215 in 2022. Joanne and Warren Anderson saw their first and only cormorant ever in Black Bay, and observers along Wakemup and Niles counted just 10, all singles.

**We have changed our mailing address from the Tower Post Office to Cook.
Our new PO Box address is PO Box 236, Cook, MN 55723**

Annual Meeting Updates

The Vermilion Lake Association (VLA) held their 55th Annual Meeting on July 29, 2023, at beautiful Camp Vermilion, located on the West end of Lake Vermilion.

Around 120+ members were in attendance. Program information tables highlighting various VLA programs were manned by volunteers, including water quality, loon stewardship, Lake Steward program, shore lunch sites, and fisheries. A beef brisket buffet dinner was followed by the annual business meeting, which was led by VLA's president Dwight Warkentin.

Members approved the minutes and treasurer's reports, and by-law changes, allowing the annual meeting to be held between June 15 and August 15. Terms of board members Terry Grosshauser, Eric Hanson, Jerry Lepper and John Yocum were renewed. New board members Andrine Lemieux and Sara Bright were elected. Following the business meeting, Doug Jensen, AIS (Aquatic Invasive Species) Prevention Planner for the MN DNR, gave a special presentation entitled "Lake Vermilion and the AIS Dirty Dozen."

VLA Board member Pat Michaelson was recognized by Dwight Warkentin for her incredible work increasing and supporting our amazing volunteers. Jerry Lepper was recognized for his many years of service as treasurer.

Raffles for the scenic photographs donated by VLA members were held. The colorful center pieces,

crafted by VLA member/volunteer Terri Heimann, were awarded to one lucky member at each table.



Above: Speaker Doug Jensen



Right: President Dwight Warkentin recognized volunteer Jerry Lepper

Below: Information booths and displays



2023 Volunteer Recognition Picnic

By Andrine Lemieux, Volunteer Co-Leader

Our volunteers form the backbone of the VLA's successes! That was the message and theme of the annual Volunteer Recognition Picnic. This year's picnic was held on June 28th at the Fire Brigade's Fire Hall west end location. This year's picnic was very well attended. Eighty volunteers filled the hall and were treated to a range of brat flavors and fixings. In addition to the delicious brats from Zup's, there were a variety of delicious bars whipped up by our own Pat Michaelson (pictured at right). Tables were organized by volunteer service and informational poster boards were on display for the loon territories and the shore lunch sites. Handouts on the loon and cormorant counts were also available for review. The Lake Steward program also provided a sample Lake Steward Sign for attendees to see.



up again this year. She also reviewed the shore lunch program's progress towards getting a fully accessible site on the lake. The night was capped off with a raffle, no pun intended, for VLA caps! New caps are on order and can be found on the VLA website. Despite some gloomy weather, all in all it was a wonderful evening of meeting old friends and making new connections.

After an hour of meet and greet and dinner, presentations were provided by current VLA President Dwight Warkentin and Volunteer Co-Leader Pat Michaelson. Dwight emphasized the importance of volunteers to the VLA and warmly thanked all of those attending for their contributions to the VLA vision of keeping our beautiful lake healthy. Pat reported that the pace of new volunteer recruitment is



Become a volunteer!
Help Us Make a Beautiful Lake Even Better!



<https://www.vermilionlakeassociation.org/get-involved/>

Thanks to our 2023 Volunteers

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)

Haugen, Gary -
Co-Leader
Watkins, Nancy -
Co-Leader
Condon, Pat
Lovgren, Jeff
Lovgren, Kathy
McNamara, Bob
Suoja, Wayne
Vohs, Richard

Communications

Ptak, Lori - Leader
Amundson, Steve
Bergman, Joanne
Deangelo, Alan
Grosshauser, Terry
Kania, Aaron
Lenertz, Steve
Michaelson, Pat
Roberts, Lisa
Sawatzky, Sheri
Thiel, RJ
Yocum, John

Volunteer Coordination

Lemieux, Andrine -
Co-Leader
Michaelson, Pat -
Co-Leader
Bies, Susan
Carson, Beth
Klapmeier, Patty
Towle, Pam
Wade, Ellen

Lake Steward Program & Shoreline Restoration

Bright, Sara - Leader
French, Hugh
Forester, Jeff
Lanigan, Kevin
Litherland, Mark
Simensen, Philip
Suoja, Wayne
Willie, Sue

Shore Lunch Sites

Ptak, Michael -
Leader-East
Zwieg, John -
Leader-West
Bonach, Edward
Born, Chris
Bremer, Melvin
Bremer, Corliss
Coplin, Wade
Fossum, Ted
Fossum, Caren
Gribble, Jim
Gribble, Ann
Hartley, Tom
Hartley, Sue
Lahti, Brian
Lipton, Susan
Ptak, Lori
Saddoris, Tad
Schultz, Mark
Schultz, Sandy
Smith, Chris
Smith, Kathleen
Swanson, Nancy
Teeter, Rick
Ulseth, Robert

Ulseth, Judy
Vagle, Scott
Vagle, Terry
Williams, Allen
Williams, Mary
Zwonitzer, Dan

Water Quality

Beveroth, Craig - Leader
Beveroth, Carol
Cotter, Carrie
Cotter, Matt
Dahl, Rob
Dahl, Liz
Dennie, Joe
Forsline, Tami
Fry, Robert
Fry, Peggy
Hunter, Peggy
Lakmann, Jim
McNamara, Bob
Pohlman, Bob
Potter, Don
Potter, Laurie
Robertson, Dale
Stebbins, Jeffrey
Suoja, Wayne
Wallace, Doug
Wied, Karl

Fisheries

Grosshauser, Terry -
Leader
Deangelo, Richard
Eisenhauer, James
Riggs, Michael
Wade, Al
Warkentin, Dwight

Wellman, Brian
Yocum, John

Annual Meeting 2023

Michaelson, Pat -
Co-Leader
Heimann, Terrie -
Co-Leader
Grosshauser, Terry
Grosshauser, Bonnie
Haugen, Gary
Heimann, Jeff
Lepper, Jerry
Ptak, Michael
Ptak, Lori
Rushing, Rachel
Sawatzky, Sheri
Wade, Ellen
Warkentin, Dwight
Watkins, Nancy
Watkins, Doug
Yocum, John
Yocum, Jaynee

Board of Directors 2023-24

Warkentin, Dwight -
President
Beveroth, Craig
Bright, Sara
Grosshauser, Terry
Hanson, Eric
Haugen, Gary
Korpela-Bontems, Jill
Lemieux, Andrine
Lepper, Jerry
Michaelson, Pat
Ptak, Lori

Sawatzky, Sheri
Mark Schmidt –Treasurer
Watkins, Nancy
Yocum, John

Navigation Lights

Bontems, Jerry-East
Leader
Zwieg, John-West Leader
Jenkins, Mike

Donor Volunteers

Cownie, Patty & Jim
Muhich, Mark & Denise
Niepagen, Lee & Ann
Olson, Eric & Karen

Resort Ambassadors

Condon, Pat
Haugen, Gary
Tjaden, David

Sentry Team

Watkins, Nancy - Leader
Ankrum, Howard
Bryers, Rob
Clausen, Brant
Clines, Larry
Esbensen, George
Dinsmore, Jason
Gibbs, Rob
Heimann, Jeff
Heimann, Terrie
Jackson, Byron
Jackson, Penny
Laurinaitis, Julie
McNamara, Bob
Oberstar, Paul
Oberstar, Sally
Patterson, Rick
Patterson, Sharon
Pohlman, Bob

Watkins, Doug
Ulseth, Robert
Zigler, Sandy

Loon Nest Cam

Sederstrom, Noel –
Leader
Michaelson, Bill
Paulson, Cheryl
Paulson, Cornie
Pietrini, Kevin
Porter, Jake
Ptak, Lori
Sederstrom, Chris

Loon & Cormorant Count

Korpela-Bontems, Jill-
East Leader
Zwieg, Claire –
West Leader
Allen, Jerry
Allen, Lori
Anderson, Joann
Anderson, Warren
Annen, Valerie
Bergman, Joanne
Beveroth, Carol
Beveroth, Craig
Bies, Charles
Bies, Susan
Blackwell, Laura
Blackwell, Tom
Bonicatto, Marsha
Bontems, Jerry
Botruff, Barry
Botruff, Penny
Boutto, Barb
Bremer, Corliss
Bremer, Melvin
Buccicone, Jenny
Carlson, Cathy

Carlson, Jim
Conger, Bailey
Conger, Bill
Cooney, Tom
Cooney, Terri
Duncan, Jeffrey
Duncan, Pam
Dunphy, Steven
Ferguson, Carol
Freeman, Linda
Freeman, Roger
Grosshauser, Bonnie
Grosshauser, Terry
Harelstad, Mark
Hertog, Gary
Hoffman, Ali
Holmes, Sali
Holmes, Stephen
Housenga, Pauly
Hujanen, Alvin
Hujanen, Florette
Jeske, Greta
Johnson, Mariliyn
Kurtz, David
Leciejewski, Val
Lenertz, Steve
Levy, Mary
Lindberg, Reany
Lindberg, Steve
Lipton, Steve
Lipton, Susan
Marbaker, Dottie
Marbaker, William
Mcgillivray, Elaine
Mcgillivray, Peter
Miesel, Keith
Moccio, Kathleen
Moore, Rick
Moore, Susan
Nelson, Heidi

Nelson, Norm
Ojala, Linda
Orr, Alan
Orr, Karen
Parkes, Ann
Pohlman, Bob
Pohlman, Kathy
Ptak, Lori
Ptak, Michael
Sawatzky, Bubba
Schultz, Mark
Schultz, Sandy
Slick, Christina
Smith, Sharon
Suoja, Wayne
Taitt, James
Tode, Bruce
Ulseth, Judy
Ulseth, Robert
Villnow, Dan
Villnow, Liz
Walker, Kern
Walker, Mary
Weller Smith, Mary Ellen
Wied, Karl
Wille, Sue (Larson)
Williams, Allen
Williams, Mary
Yocum, Jaynee
Yocum, John
Zwieg, John

Thanks to others who accompanied our designated volunteers to assist with the '23 count

VLA Dock Signs

Lenertz, Steve
Maki, Julia

If you are interested in joining one of these teams, contact Andrine Lemieux at Lemieux.andrine@gmail.com

Captains' Choice at the Boat Show

Joanne Bergman, VLA Member/Volunteer

The featured antiques and restorations at the Boat Show at the Landing always inspire awe. This year, a unique little ten-foot craft turned a lot of heads—for good reason. Sawyer LeDoux, boat restorer extraordinaire, entered his brightly-colored 1970 G-W Invader with its 1965 35 hp Mercury.

Sawyer is 14, an eighth-grader at Forest Lake Middle School with a lifelong attachment to Lake Vermilion and to boats of all kinds. Growing up boating, fishing, and ice fishing, Sawyer naturally admired the very cool and costly boats at the annual show, but he didn't dream that "Flat Bottom Girl," named after a song by the band Queen, could really compete.

We may say Sawyer was literally steeped in Vermilion lore because parents Bridget and Josh LeDoux put Sawyer (in a baby-sized life jacket) in their live well to splash around while they fished. When he was about 7, neighbors Jenny and Joe Stanaway became his mentors, encouraging him to operate watercraft (as his mom says) "safety, respectfully, and responsibly."

Sawyer is an only child, and the outdoors life is Sawyer's "best life." On the lake, he "waves to everyone, stops and talks to people, and picks up trash on the lake. He enjoys waterskiing, wake boarding, fishing, knee boarding, one-wheeling, and doing well in school."

Obviously, he has added fiberglass boat restoration to his list of skills. The family found his boat on

Continued on next page



Above: Captains' Choice award went to "Flat Bottom Girl". A 1970, 10', G-W Invader. Owned by Sawyer LeDoux from Lake Vermilion.

Below: The boat before Sawyer's restoration.



2023 Lake Vermilion Antique and Classic Boat Show

The 31st anniversary of the Lake Vermilion Boat Show was held on Sunday September 3rd at the Landing Restaurant. It was a gorgeous steamy day, a record turnout of beautiful boats gleaming in the sunshine, large steady crowd and the Landing burgers were being flipped in record time!

Thank you to the Vermilion Lake Association for your continued support and stewardship of Lake Vermilion. The Vermilion Boat Show was able to raise \$1,168.00 for the Lake Association this year. We want to thank all our new and old sponsors for their participation, to the boat captains, and their families. Without their help we would not be able to provide such a fantastic weekend. Thank you to the Landing Restaurant for hosting this wonderful event. We couldn't ask for a better venue.

The date for next year's show is September 1, 2024. Anyone interested in displaying their antique or classic boat, whether it's wood, fiberglass or homebuilt, please contact lakevermilionboatshow@aol.com for more information.



Peoples Choice award went to "Swan Song". A 1938, 22' Chris Craft custom runabout. Owned by the Hurley Family on Lake Vermilion.

Captains' Choice...from page 8

Craiglist in August of 2021 and, under his parents' guidance, spent countless hours patching and sanding, priming and painting, restoring the steering, adding chrome trim and lights and, finally, cleaning and painting the outboard.

Sawyer came to the boat show with a full appreciation of all the highly-polished and enviable watercraft in their slips, all of them impressive for their longevity, beauty, and value. Entry requirements for the boat show competition seem simply to be that a watercraft (motorboat, sailboat, canoe) be unique, retro, restored, and showy.

No one was more astonished than Sawyer himself when he received the Captains' Choice award. He was in disbelief and beaming, on Cloud 9, when he heard "Flat-Bottom Girl" had won the Captains' Choice Award which, this year, is a trophy representing the stern of a classic boat with exhaust pipe.

Right: Sawyer sanding the fiberglass hull.



Meet our newest recipients of the Lake Steward Award

Sara Bright, VLA Board Member and Lake Steward Leader, bestows Lake Steward signs to member property owners who have met Lake Steward criteria. After completing an online quiz, Sara, along with the owners and other Lake Steward volunteers, observes the property, answers questions, and gives recommendations. Congratulations!



Above: Lori and Mike Ptak



Above: Kathy and Mike Minkler, with President Dwight Warkentin

Left: Julia Reynolds



Above: Susan (Larson) Wille

Find the quiz and more information at

<https://www.vermilionlakeassociation.org/other-programs/become-a-lake-steward/>

Questions? Contact Sara Bright at VLALakeSteward@gmail.com

Creating a Tougher Buffer

By Kelsey Cooke, Conservation Corps, North St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District

Buzzing bees among a diverse blanketing of blooms are welcome additions to the backyard throughout the seasons.

The happy pollinator habitat we see above ground is only about a third of the overall native plant structure. Cultivating native plants on your shoreline is more than surface level. The extensive underground roots of native plants help them absorb moisture and nutrients, but more than that, they contribute to the success of the environment around them.

Compared to standard turf grass, the deep roots of native plants, like Little Bluestem or Black-Eyed Susan, will hold the soil in place, helping prevent the process of erosion. Shoreline areas in particular will benefit from this increased buffer. As thriving roots reach deeper into the soil, they create pathways for water to infiltrate into the soil instead of running off.

Locating native plantings where stormwater collects in your yard can also help improve drainage, reduce runoff, and prevent pollutants from entering nearby waterways. A landscaping plan that places less emphasis on lawns and incorporates a variety of deep-rooted native plants will contribute to the long-term success of your shoreland. Native plants can

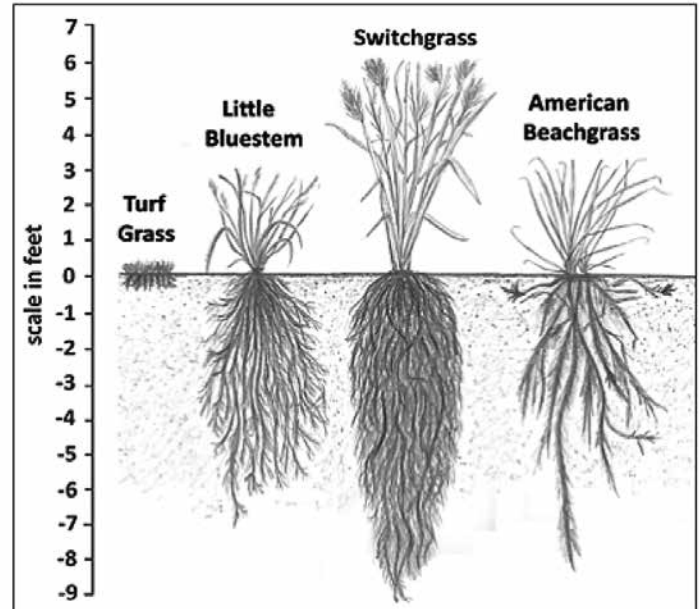


Photo: Pottawattamie and Harrison County SWCD

provide an ever-changing foreground to your view and a resilient landscape for years to come. For more information about improving your shoreline with native landcare visit North St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District at <https://www.nslswcd.org/> or call (218) 749-2000.

VLA Caps

Wear your new caps proudly to show your support for your lake association. The price is right: \$15, plus \$3 shipping for any number of caps to one address. Free local pickup.

Check out the three style choices at our website (see link below)

For more info, contact Sheri Sawatzky, 218-780-8178, sherisawatzky@gmail.com

Thanks for helping us protect and improve our great lake.

<https://www.vermilionlakeassociation.org/merchandise/caps/>



2023 Aquatic Plant Survey Report

The Vermilion Lake Association has maintained a comprehensive strategy to monitor for the possible invasion of invasive aquatic plants. This involves utilizing the vigilant observations of our team of lake sentries who are throwing rakes during the summer at assigned water access sites and resorts. In addition, the VLA annually uses professional services to perform an aquatic survey of the lake. This survey monitors changes in the plant community that could indicate changes in the lake's health and detect any new invasive species so rapid response efforts can be implemented for their control.

The 2023 aquatic plant survey targeted eleven high use areas of the lake, primarily accesses and resorts. Vegetation was observed at 357 of the 769 sample points which is 47.4% of sites. In previous years the percentage was generally less than 30%. There were also significant variations across the target areas. Pike Bay is the least vegetated area of Lake Vermilion and has fairly low plant diversity. However, this year there was more. Everett Bay, a shallow soft bottomed area with one public access and one heavily used private access, is historically one of the most heavily vegetated areas in the lake. The water quality seemed to be reduced affecting some of the plant species. Strong winds early in the season may have disturbed the mucky bottom of this shallow bay reducing the growth of certain plants.

In general the most common species of vegetation observed throughout the lake were Wild Celery, Flat Stem Pondweed and Coontail. A total of 33 species were found with variable distribution. A maximum of 20 species were encountered in Stuntz Bay. One rare species, Nitella Macounii, was encountered which has only been recorded in Minnesota a few times.

Steve Henry of Aquatic Survey Professionals with one of his rakes which has pulled out lots of weeds in Stuntz Bay.

2023 Targeted Survey Areas (marked in red)



Tables of species and occurrences for the full lake are contained within the report accessible on the VLA's website. The most important finding was that no aquatic invasive species were found. Thank you to all who use this lake for their continuous caution in maintaining the health of Vermilion and preventing the introduction of an invasive aquatic weed.



Nancy Watkins
VLA Board Member/
AIS Co-Leader



Another Task for the Fall “To Do List”

Late summer or fall is a good time to check for any evidence of zebra mussels.

Docks, dock floats and supports or any objects that have been in the lake for the summer should be visually inspected. Zebra mussels may be attached to trim tabs, rubber gaskets or along the grooves of keels on pontoon boats.

You should also examine rocks and other hard surfaces along the shoreline and water access sites. Focus your attention on hard surfaces that have been in the shade as zebra mussels tend to avoid direct sunlight.

During early infestations, zebra mussels are likely to be small ($\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long) and the number attached may be minimal. Sometimes you may not see them but as you run your hand along the inspection sites you may note areas that feel like sandpaper. If you do find zebra mussels, please complete and send in an online Volunteer Monitor Report Form by Nov. 1

(see link below)

Your assistance can provide help tracking their distribution. Early detection is important to protect your property and Minnesota’s water resources.



https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/volunteering/zebramussel_monitoring/index.html

Board of Directors and Officers 2023

Cook

Sheri Sawatzky, Secretary/Membership, 2750 Wakemup Village Rd W, Cook, MN 55723, 218-666-5512, 218-780-8178, sherisawatzky@gmail.com

Eric Hanson, 2746 Vermilion Dr, Cook, MN 55723, 218-666-5478, 218-780-1563, eric@pehrsonlodge.com

Dwight Warkentin, President, PO Box 97, Cook, MN 55723, 651-269-0674, dhwarkentin@hotmail.com

Terry Grosshauser, 7307 Oak Narrows Rd, Cook, MN 55723, 218-666-0580, 608-207-1509, terrygrosshauser@gmail.com

Mark Schmidt, Treasurer, 8780 Raps Rd, Cook, MN 55723, 612-810-4570, bigwalleye55@gmail.com

Pat Michaelson, Vice-President, 2384 Deerwood Lane, Cook, MN 55723, 612-306-7702, plmichaelson@gmail.com

Tower

Andrine Lemieux, 1523 Echo Narrows Ln, Tower, MN 55790, 218-979-7893, lemieux.andrine@gmail.com

Gary Haugen, 1903 Westhaven Dr, Tower, MN 55790, 612-720-2853, 218-753-3021, ghmedrep@gmail.com

Lori Ptak, 3505 Downers Dr., St. Anthony, MN 55418, 612-247-3751, lori@ptak.org

Jerry Lepper, 3087 Old Hwy 77, Tower, MN 55790, 218-753-2629, 218-404-2320, jnclep4@frontiernet.net

Jill Korpela-Bontems, 4437 Big Rock Rd, Tower, MN 55790, 218-753-6324, jandjatbigrock@frontiernet.net

Sara Bright, 95043 Smarts Bay, Tower, MN 55790, 612-383-8318, VLALakeSteward@gmail.com

Nancy Watkins, 5981 412th St, Rice, MN 56367, 320-291-2363, 2bitfarm@gmail.com

John Yocum, 4102 Hoel Rd, Tower, MN 55790, 407-873-3883, snootman@aol.com

Craig Beveroth, 9416 Hearthside Dr, Tower, MN 55790, 952-428-9155, cbeveroth@comcast.net

Wait, we don't want AIS in our lake, but...

We recently took a road trip to Montana. While driving on the highways, we noticed many signs directing vehicles hauling boats to pull into Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) inspection stations. These looked much like the truck weigh stations we see around Minnesota. At the time, we mused that this may be a good strategy to prevent AIS from spreading to other lakes, maybe even better than waiting till they get to their destination water body.



Lori Ptak
VLA Board Member/
Newsletter Volunteer

Then I came across the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) press release from Monday, September 11, 2023, published in the September

“Water Connects Us All” newsletter from Minnesota Lakes and Rivers (MLR). So far this year, FWP and its partners have inspected more than 86,000 watercraft for aquatic invasive species. Of those, 45 were mussel-fouled and more than 400 were found with aquatic weeds. The FWP reported that in the last few weeks, a ski boat recently purchased in Minnesota was intercepted with mussels at the Wibaux water-

craft inspection station. The boat was decontaminated, locked to the trailer and released to its final destination in Pend Oreille, Idaho. Idaho was notified to allow for follow-up.

The Wibaux station also intercepted a wakeboard boat that was recently purchased in Minnesota with mussels in the sea strainer. The boat was decontaminated, locked to the trailer and authorities at Lake Tahoe, its destination, were notified for follow-up.

The Broadus inspection intercepted a recently purchased mussel-fouled ski boat from Minnesota heading for Big Sky. Staff decontaminated the boat, locked it to the trailer and FWP staff followed up with the owner for a full decontamination.

We are doing our best to keep zebra mussels and other AIS out of Lake Vermilion, but as a state, certainly don't want to be sending these offenders to other parts of the country. As Jeff Forester of MLR says, “Minnesota must do better.”



Summer 2023 Cover Photo Correction

The name of the photographer whose photo graced our Summer 2023 issue was inadvertently misspelled. Our apologies to Kit Larsen! To see more of his work, go to <https://www.smokeyphoto.com/>.



Dock Signs Show Member Support for our Mission....to protect and improve

The 12x18 inch sign is designed to attach in either corner of dock front with self-tapping sheet metal screws or stainless hose clamps. Some members are choosing to mount them on their boat houses as well. As you can see in the photo, VLA member Kathryn Allen has chosen to display signs on the road, as well as on her dock!

These striking aluminum signs with UV protection can be ordered on our website at

<https://www.vermilionlakeassociation.org/merchandise/membership-signs/>

We Love the Lake

Lyrics By Dave Becker, VLA member, performed by the Becker grandchildren, Cora, Liv, and Ritajane, who used a canoe paddle as their guitar props. The song is sung to the tune "I Love LA" by Randy Newman (find it on YouTube)

Leavin' the City

The car's all packed

And even doggie has her spot

Won't stop till we see Gordy's

Burgers and fries

If you stand in line

Rollin' down that old highway

Leavin' teachers and school behind

Eagles soaring and loons a'calling

It's the place where we unwind

Get in the Tritoon, put down the top

**Turn up the music and don't let the Chee-
tos drop**

We're gonna ride it till

**We just can't ride
it no more**

**From the South
Switch to the
Landing**

From the Black Bay to the Spring Bay

Everybody's very happy

The sun is shining all the time

Looks like another perfect day

We love the lake (we love it)

We love the lake (we love it)

We love it

Look at those islands

Look at those trees

Look at that sauna we ain't gonna freeze



Look at the water

Aint nothin' like it nowhere

Pontoon Rides (we love it)

Moosebirds (we love it)

Starry Nights (we love it)

South Switch (we love it, we love it)

We love The Lake (we love it)

We love the lake (we love it)

We love the lake (we love it)

Dogs love Lake Vermilion, too...

Ole, the Dog

Ole was the beloved pet of a longtime VLA member and volunteer. Ole was 12 this summer when he had to be put down. The member said "He was a great old friend. He was with me in the boat every trip. He loved the lake as much, maybe more, than I do."

"He is your friend, your partner, your defender, your dog. You are his life, his love, his leader. He will be yours, faithful and true to the last beat of his heart."



PFAS and PFOS Testing of Vermilion Fish

The testing of Minnesota lakes, rivers, and fish is performed by three Minnesota departments: Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The MDH tests fish and provides fish advisories for the state and individual bodies of water. The MPCA tests lakes and rivers for water quality.



Terry Grosshauser
VLA Board Member

The DNR is responsible for collecting fish for testing and helping with the communication of fish advisories.

As we have mentioned in previous publications, PFOS (500 compounds) and PFAS are considered forever chemicals and when prevalent in lakes or rivers they collect in the muscle of fish. According to information from the MDH, the highest levels of these chemicals are associated with wastewater effluents from municipal and industrial facilities, landfills, and runoff from sites where AFFF-firefighting foam with PFAS were used. PFAS are detected in the environment, people, fish, and wildlife globally, so low level exposures are likely even without local sources. Fortunately, Lake Vermilion does not have significant municipal or manufacturing sites within the watershed.

During current communication with the Minnesota Department of Health, the department was able to provide us with the fish testing results for PFAS, PFOS, Mercury, and PCBs that were done in 2010. According to the Department of Health:

PFOS and other chemicals within the class of PFAS: PFAS were monitored in Lake Vermilion fish in 2010. At that time none of the PFAS chemicals analyzed were detected in fish filets. This is a very good piece of background information related to Lake Vermilion. Since that time there are newer analytical methods that analyze for more PFAS at lower detection limits. However, the main PFAS of concern for people eating fish are PFOS, and they were not detected above 5ng/g or ppb. Based on current PFOS fish consumption guidance, any PFOS concentration less than 10 ng/g doesn't result in more stringent guidance. But it is important to note that MDH along with the EPA is continuing to review new monitor-

ing and toxicological datasets related to PFOS.

That data may change the statewide guidance in the future, so it is good to check the guidance a few times a year or before fishing for updates.

The data from the MDH also includes data on mercury and PCB testing of fish. There was no indication of PCBs in Vermilion fish. I have the data on mercury and, in our next publication, we will explain the levels of mercury found in Vermilion fish.

The Minnesota DNR, along with MDH, has received additional funding from the legislature to build data on PFAS in fish tissue. In addition, there is also good news related to PFAS. The concentrations in fish in many waters that have been resampled are showing a declining trend. Regular fish monitoring will be important to provide the public with accurate fish consumption guidance. The ongoing evaluations of monitoring data and toxicological data on PFAS and mercury are a high priority in Minnesota.

The other good news is that, as a result of our contacts with the MDH, we were able to get on the list of lakes to be retested. We also had to check with the DNR about collecting the necessary fish for processing and testing by the MDH. The Tower DNR has committed to providing the necessary fish for testing by next summer. Testing of fish from different species and different ages is a significant and costly effort, since the cost for one sample is \$430.

We realized that the data from 2010 was older and pursued a current set of testing of fish tissue from Lake Vermilion. We should still recognize the statewide guidelines for consuming fish as a good guide to follow. The new testing should confirm whether the levels that are in Vermilion fish are within the state guidelines. Considering that new testing of fish from similar lakes has shown a decline in the levels in fish, we hopefully will attain similar results. The MDH does promote consuming fish in Minnesota because they provide excellent protein and that should be considered always in the discussions related to the potential for consuming fish with low levels of these chemicals.

Got PFAS/Got Algae?

The PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) results are finally back after a snafu by the testing lab. As you may recall from the Summer 2023 Newsletter, we sampled the major sources of Vermilion's water (East Two River, West Two River, Pike



Craig Beveroth
VLA Board Member

River) and a 'neutral' spot in Big Bay (east of Potato Island) on July 31. Due to the cost involved, we only sampled these four locations. The results were better than we could have hoped for. The levels of PFOS (the major PFAS that we analyze for and a suspected carcinogen)

were below the detection limits of the instrumentation required by the EPA for the analyses. For our science orientated members, our sampling sites were below 1.8 ng/L which is well below the EPA's suggested 4 ng/L for drinking water.

Our past summer was probably one of the worst for algae in the lake. Several algal blooms were noted toward late summer primarily on the East end of the lake. A combination of heat, sun, calm days, carbon dioxide, and nutrients are the ingredients needed for algae (phytoplankton) to flourish. With the many calm days, the algae found it easy to move through the water allowing flotation to the surface where they grew thicker and faster, and as they grew, the blooms absorbed sunlight making the water warmer which promoted even more blooms. With calm, sunny days in the 90's, it was the perfect storm for algae to thrive. We even saw surface water temperatures in the high 70's. We don't believe we had a problem with nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen) since this area has historically tested low for these two elements along with chlorophyll a. Note: all water chemistry results are available on the VLA website, vermilionlakeassociation.org, under "Other Programs/Water Quality Protection/Water Quality Monitoring-Recent Reports".

Anyone have problems getting the boat off the lift?

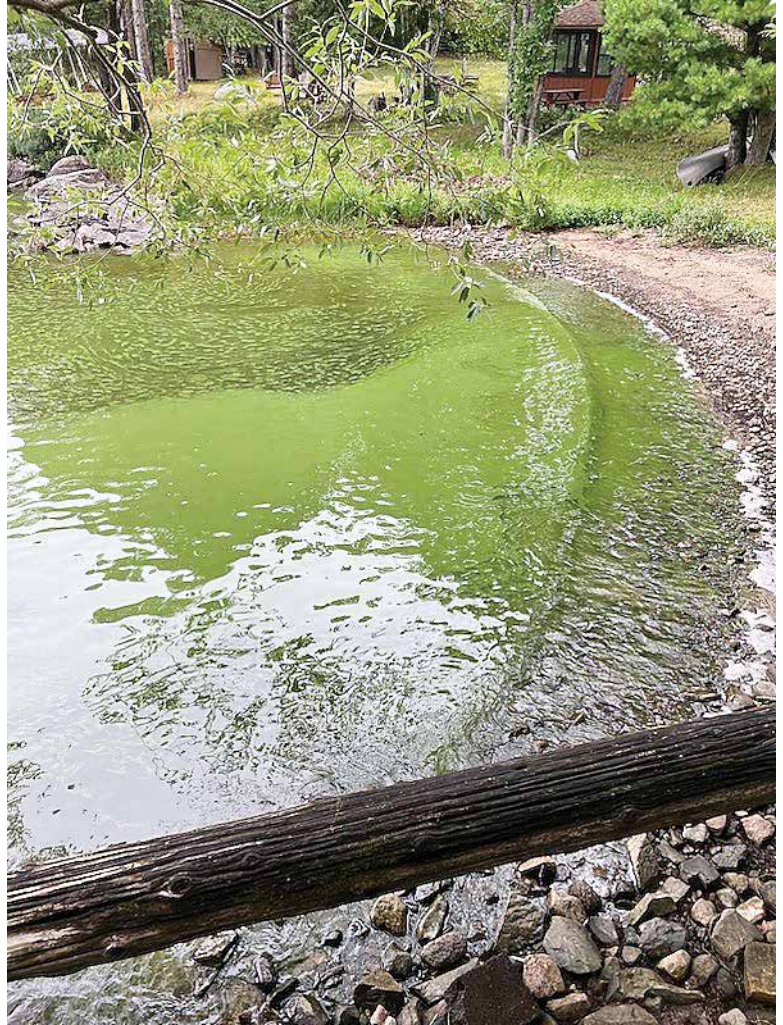


Photo by VLA member Lori Roberts, near Pine Island

As of Sept. 1, the official water level had fallen 24 inches from the May 8 ice-out. At my dock in Pike Bay, we were 30 inches down as of Sept. 21. Fortunately, the rains of late Sept have brought these levels back up, but not enough. Let's hope for lots of fall rain and winter snow.

Vermilion's water is great. Let's do our best to keep it that way.

Craig Beveroth is the VLA Water Quality Leader

Vertical Jigging for Walleyes

The Antique Angler here with a somewhat new approach to jigging for walleyes. Vertical jigging using tungsten jigging raps used to be something done only when ice fishing, but that



The Antique Angler

has changed to year-long use. Some people may look at a jigging rap and wonder how a hunk of tungsten with hooks can be an effective way to target walleye. The darting action you can impart on these baits with the right technique is like a “walking the

dog” topwater bait, but underwater. A jigging raps action will help fish home in on the bait and react to it.

Fishing a jigging rap style bait (and there are several different manufacturers with slightly different jigs) can be an effective way to catch single fish or several fish in a location. Use your electronics to find some fish or fish your own hotspot for walleyes.

As the bait is fluttering down to the bottom, it’ll entice a hit. Most of the hits occur when the bait hits or is sitting on the bottom. Walleye are known to pin their prey on the bottom, and you may not feel much. When you go to pop the jig upward, the fish



will be there. Cast or flip the jig out and let it settle to the bottom when line goes slack and then give it a strong upward jerk and let it settle back to the bottom.

This technique works the best when you are fishing rocky extensions leading to a mudflat, reefs, humps, saddles, or break lines near the main lake basin. I like using them near the break lines where the depth drops from 15 to 30 feet. The vertical jigging rap application is most successful in areas that you know have walleyes. Other techniques can be better when trying to find fish.

I use a 6.5-foot rod with medium stiffness and a spinning reel is my preference. For line, key professionals recommend using regular monofilament line, but use of braid with a six-foot leader of monofilament will work as well. What people have found is that this technique is not only good during the fall or winter, but throughout the year. The small hooks and placement of the hooks sometimes makes it difficult to keep a walleye from throwing the hooks so use a net for landing the fish. New jig heads using the heavy tungsten head and a plastic body save on using live bait and I have seen guides using this combination. If you have not tried this technique, be patient and keep ripping the jig. Good luck!!!



VLA water quality leader Craig Beveroth attended Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) Volunteer Water Monitoring Program Sept. 21 in Duluth where he presented VLA’s water quality program. Presentations were made by University of Minnesota-Duluth, Itasca Soil and Water Conservation District, MPCA, Goodners Lake, and VLA. Approximately 75 attendees from all corners of MN were present.

Handling Muskies Carefully is Critical to their Survival

This summer, word came to the attention of the VLA Board's fisheries team that several dead muskies had been reported on the lake, mostly in the west basin. These unfortunate events could indicate several problems: the muskies were mishandled after landing, the fish were repeatedly caught, a heat-related issue due to the lake heating



up very quickly after ice out, the fish broke off with the terminal tackle still in place as a result of the line being too light or any combination of the above factors. The board felt that this merited an article on how to handle muskies, so they had the best chance for survival.

First, a picture is worth a thousand words as they say, or in this case a video. I found two YouTube videos on the specific topic of how to handle muskies after landing. Videos show the nuances and details that are difficult to convey in plain written form. I screened several videos on the internet and found these two, in particular, do an excellent job of explaining this topic to the viewer.

The first video is called How To Properly Handle Muskies by Livin' the Dream Guide Service at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kyxn2J2kOMU>. This video is under three minutes long and uses a plastic model of a musky to quickly go over the key points.

The second video is 14-½ minutes long and is far more detailed than the first. If you have time to watch it, this is the one I would recommend. It is called How To Handle a Musky (THE RIGHT WAY) by Doug Wegner fishing. Its web address is

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=asSQKszobp8>.

Here is a summary of some of the key points in this video:

- Use a coated net, large enough to land muskies
- Get the hooks out of the fish as soon as possible, while the fish is still in the net.
- If possible, keep your catch in the net at all times.



Proper handling means keeping the musky horizontal. Never hold the musky vertically.

- Dehook and release it right there in the net.
- Keep the slime (natural protective coating) on the fish intact.
- He shows you what tools you may potentially need and advises to have them ready to go.
- If you need to take the fish out of the water for a measurement or a photo, he shows you exactly how to grab the fish using your dominant hand with a glove on.
- Never hold muskie vertically. Always keep them less than 45 degrees of horizontal. Remember, these are a heavy fish and designed to be supported by the water all the time. Holding them vertically can cause non-survivable, gravitational damage to their internal organs.
- He shows exactly how to release the fish back into the water.
- Use heavy line to minimize the chance of a break-off and having the fish swim away with terminal tackle inside them.



Vermilion Lake Association

PO Box 696

Tower MN 55790

Volunteers Make the Difference

The Vermilion Lake Association has been fortunate over the years to have a dedicated group of leaders and volunteers to staff our important activities. We are grateful for their help.

Please consider joining this team. We have needs for both workers and leaders, for those with only a few hours to spare, and for those who can make a larger time commitment.

If you think you may be interested, please contact Andrine Lemieux, VLA Volunteer Program Leader, at 612-306-7702 (cell) or Lemieux.andrine@gmail.com.

Vermilion Lake Association

Sheri Sawatzky, Member Records • P.O. Box 696 • Cook MN 55793
sherisawatzky@gmail.com • 218-780-8178

Membership year runs from Jan 1st through Dec 31st

☐ 2024 New Member ☐ 2024 Renewal

Membership level

☐ \$20.00 Household membership
☐ \$50.00 Business or Organization

Member Name _____

Spouse Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email (requested) _____

Phone (requested) _____

Please clip or copy this form and send to the address above.

Become a Member

Join those who love Lake Vermilion as much as you do. Help us continue the many activities you've just read about.

Not sure? Check us out at our website VermilionLakeAssociation.org. We're pretty sure you'll like our vision for the future and the work we have underway now to make Lake Vermilion even better.

Please mail a check with the form on this page or join at our website using PayPal or a credit card.

The Vermilion Lake Association is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Do You Qualify?

Trick question. Anyone can join the lake association whose mission it is to protect and improve Lake Vermilion. No need to be a property owner. No need to be a fisherman or a kayaker. Just someone who cares about our great lake and wants to protect her for the next generation.